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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001015

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: IRAQ: TURKEY WILL SUPPORT ITG, SENDS POSITIVE
SIGNALS ON JA'AFARI

REF: STATE 30179

Classified By: Political Military Counselor Timothy A. Betts. Reasons 1
.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) PolMilOffs called on MFA Head of Iraq Department Avni Botsali on Feb. 23 to deliver reftel demarche. In response, Botsali read from (and handed us) cleared press guidance that he had drafted for MFA spokesman Namik Tan on Feb. 17. The guidance notes the UNSC president's statement of Feb. 16 as well as UNSYG Annan's Feb. 14 statement concerning the announcement of the election results. It pledges Turkey's continued support for "a fair and democratic regime" in Iraq. The guidance further states that Turkey will continue its constructive dialogue with the ITG, with all political elements in Iraqi, and with neighboring countries and the international community.

2. (C) Botsali emphasized to us that Turkey will work with and support the ITG. He noted that the United Iraqi Alliance's choice for PM, Ibrahim Ja'afari, had visited Ankara in December and was well-known to Turkey; he added that Turkey is ready to work with whoever will lead the ITG. When PolMilOff asked if Turkey plans to issue another statement following the formation of the ITG, Botsali replied that he had not been planning to draft one. (Comment: This is not really Botsali's decision. We will work to get a positive statement from the Turks when the ITG is formed. End comment.)

3. (U) While MFA Spokesman Tan appears not to have explicitly deployed his press guidance expressing Turkish support for the ITG, he did respond to a reporters' question on Ja'afari. Tan said that Ja'afari knows Turkey well and met with both PM Erdogan and FonMin Gul during his Dec. 1-3 visit to Ankara. Tan described these meetings as "comprehensive and very useful."

4. (U) Iraq posts minimize considered.
EDELMAN